

May 29, 2020

Shelley Fite, Esq.
Federal Defender Services of Wisconsin
1638 N Marshall St
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Ms. Fite,

I am writing in support of Wayne Ruoho's request for compassionate release from Rochester Federal Medical Center. I am a childhood friend of Wayne and his family. His now deceased sister, Laura Ruoho, was my best girlfriend in high school. During my high school and early college years, I regularly spent time with the Ruoho family at their home in Saint Paul. Wayne's mother, Dorothy, was like a second mom to many. We regularly had meals and barbeques at the family home and we helped Mrs. Ruoho with projects around the house. Wayne's father, Wayne Sr., also lived in the family home. He had an alcoholic addiction and typically spent his time alone in the living room watching television and drinking. Mr. Ruoho was known to have a temper and easily became angry and he would lash out at Wayne, Laura, and their brother Jeff. I witnessed the family walk on eggshells and avoid him when he was drinking to avoid confrontations. Mr. Ruoho died in June 1989.

Like many teenagers at our high school, we attended weekend house parties where there was alcohol consumption and experimentation with marijuana. This was also the time of the 1980s crack cocaine epidemic, and some in our circle also experimented with crack and also with methamphetamines. Over these years, I witnessed some in our circle of friends become addicted and saw the negative impact on their lives. This included Wayne, who was my best friend Laura's little brother. Laura also became addicted and struggled with throughout her life. Wayne was also a close friend of my husband's deceased brother, Dale Kelsey, who died in 1988 at the age of 21 from a cocaine overdose. This was a very traumatic event for our circle of friends.

By 1990, I was working and attending college full time. My life was on a different path and my friendship with the Ruoho family fell by the wayside. I graduated with my bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota in 1992 and began my public service career in human services. I was inspired to pursue a career in social work though the support I received from a school social worker who counseled me and helped me work through a few of my own family challenges during high school.

Over the subsequent years, I occasionally corresponded with Laura who shared with me about Wayne's long federal prison sentence and the significant health problems he faced while in prison, including his successful fight with bladder cancer. Following Laura's death in 2017, I was interested in reconnecting with Wayne to find out how he was doing, how his two children were doing, and to hear about his plans for the future after he completes his sentence. We have been in touch through the prison email system over the last 18 months. Wayne also recently shared with me a clemency petition he drafted himself and a variety of supporting documents that outline his history of addiction, incarceration, and how he has spent the last 13 years in prison.

In my professional position as manager of foster care licensing for the State of Minnesota, I oversee the statewide foster system. This includes assessing potential foster parents to determine whether they can provide a safe, nurturing home for foster children. Under Minnesota state law, there are a variety criminal offenses that

Shelley Fite, Esq.

Page 2

cause individuals to be disqualified from providing foster care to children, including theft, drugs, and violent crimes against individuals. Disqualified individuals may request reconsideration and demonstrate that they have been rehabilitated and no longer pose a risk of harm to potential foster children. Placement of foster children with relatives is a priority, and some relative caregivers have prior criminal histories directly related to their experiences with drug addiction and poverty. However, this history does not diminish the importance of maintaining family ties for foster children and minimizing the trauma of their removal from the family home. Foster care applicants with criminal disqualifications who are able to demonstrate that they do not pose a risk of harm are granted a set aside or variance and can be licensed to provide foster care to children. The statutory factors that drive these decisions include the number and nature of the criminal offenses, the time that has passed since the last offense, the individual's acceptance of responsibility for their offenses, and completion of treatment and rehabilitation. The law also requires consideration of the importance of maintaining relative relationships for foster children.

From my professional experience in the foster care system, I see clear parallels to Wayne's history and situation. Wayne's acknowledges and accepts responsibility for his criminal offenses. He has insight into the factors that led him to his criminal offense that resulted in his lengthy prison sentence. Most importantly, he recognizes the impact that his drug crime had on others and he articulates a sincere desire to leave a different and positive legacy of his life.

I am impressed that Wayne has spent his years in prison proactively building his knowledge and skills, and finding ways to contribute and serve others. While in prison, he has completed significant education in the trades, has successfully completed various leadership trainings, and has demonstrated leadership and compassion with his peers. He has done all this while facing various serious health challenges during his incarceration, including two bouts with bladder cancer. His work in the prison as a companion to peers suffering from serious mental and physical health challenges is particularly impressive to me.

With the current Coronavirus pandemic and Wayne's serious underlying health conditions and obesity, I am worried that Wayne may die in prison and not have a chance to give back and repay society for his past transgressions. We have serious societal issues that someone like Wayne can be a part of healing through his own lived experiences and the compassion, mentorship, and leadership he has built and demonstrated throughout his incarceration.

Wayne has a supportive and healthy family network waiting for him to come home and be part of the family again. I am confident that he will have the support he needs be a self-sufficient and contributing member to society upon his release from prison.

Sincerely,


Mary Kelsey
10954 Eagle View Circle
Woodbury, MN 55129
mpkelsey@comcast.net

To whom it may concern,

This is a character letter on behalf of my uncle Wayne Lawrence Ruoho. I have always remembered my uncle as a good person. He was always helping people. I remember him always being around. That's more than I can say for my own father. Wayne always helped my mom, his sister Laura. If we weren't behaving or doing our chores he made sure we did. I'm glad he did. I remember when my aunt Lynn, his sister passed away. My whole family was in the waiting room. Wayne was already worried and sobbing when we got there. When the nurse told us she was gone my uncle broke down into this deep crying. I felt his heart break. I have never seen my uncle cry before. He has always been a keep your chin up guy. My aunt Lynn passed away in June. We had a summer long garage sale to cover funeral costs. He was there at dawn everyday. Making sure everything got set up on time. He always brought drinks in the cooler for us kids and everyone. He always made sure to take care of small details like that. I can say that most of the great things I have experienced are because of my uncle. Happiness, security, comfort, love, self worth, independence and more. My uncle wayne is definitely a father figure to me. After he first went to prison he would still encourage me to do better for myself and my future. When I was 21 I got my first apartment. Wayne was happy for me but he still wanted me to know about renters insurance. You know. Small details like that. He still encourages me and family members to stay on the right path in life. Wayne is still someone that I look up to at my age of 30. My uncle Wayne is a good human being. While he has beat cancer in prison he continues to have health issues. Even though he has health issues he still taught class, provided hospice care to other inmates and so much more in prison. That shows just a small part of the kind of man Wayne Ruoho is. He has a big heart and is a caring human being. Right before my grandma Dorothy, his mom passed away Wayne got to talk to her on the phone. She couldn't speak but she could hear her baby boy on the phone. Her youngest child. He talked about his happy childhood memories with her. Like how she always had plenty of popsicles for the kids on hot days. He cried and said how great of a mother she was to him and how thankful he was that she loved him so much. She died not too long after the phone call. 3 years ago my mother laura, his sister passed away. I know that was hard for him to cope in there but he is. I know he will remain to be a good person. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely, Brittany Ruoho

Dear Judge Crabb,

06/01/2020

My name is Miranda Mudgett. I am Wayne Ruoho's niece. I would like to start by saying that My uncle is truly a genuine caring man, with a heart of gold. He is a family man, who not only did everything he could for his own family, but also helped my mom (his sister) raise my siblings and I when we were growing up. I looked up to him as a father figure. He made sure that I knew I could depend on him, to be there for me when I couldn't depend on anyone else. He was the one that showed up to my high school graduation, not my biological dad. He would play sports with us, take us fishing, and take us to Valleyfair. He did stuff for us, that nobody else could. Not only has he helped my family, he has helped strangers too. I've also watched him buy food for homeless people and bring it to them.

Since Wayne has been incarcerated, he has done many great things. He has taken classes, taught classes, and coached people. He has rarely been in trouble. My uncle has continued to be a father, an uncle, and a brother. He keeps in touch with our family, through calls, emails, and visits. He has also missed good moments and heartbreaking moments. From missing graduations, birthdays and new babies, to not being able to be there, when my grandma and my mom passed away.

Wayne has many health conditions, some of which run in our family. With the 2 biggest things being heart problems and cancer. He lost both of his sisters at young ages, because of heart problems. I know he does his best to manage his health, given the situation. But it can be hard, not having access to care whenever he may need it.

I know Wayne will be a law abiding citizen. He will take care of his health and his family. He already has people willing to give him a job or help him find a job. He has said numerous times, that he would never put himself in a position to go back to jail. I truly believe that, since I have only seen him in jail one other time and that was approximately 25 years ago. He is now older and wiser, and knows that jail is not where he wants to spend his life. I do not want him to die in prison.

Judge Crabb, I am asking that you please consider granting my uncle compassionate release. Please give him a second chance, to build a new life, to manage his health better and to be there for his family.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Miranda Mudgett

Shelley Fite

From: Bill/Julie <billy_julie@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, May 31, 2020 7:13 PM
To: Shelley Fite
Subject: Wayne Ruoho

My name is William Richards. I meant Wayne in Oxford federal prison. I started working in the construction area and Wayne was the head of cabinet making. he showed me a lot on how to build cabinets and really everything to do with construction. I knew he was very knowledgeable with woodworking and he made cabinets for the entire facility. We have stayed in touch since my release and I feel strongly if he got a second chance that he would no doubt be able to work as an independent contractor or at a construction company. Wayne spoke highly of his family and mainly stayed to himself and to my knowledge never had any conflict with inmates or staff. Feel free to contact me if I can help in any other way. Thanks. (402)281-5023

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

Shelley Fite

From: Kacey Fischer <kfischertbp@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, May 31, 2020 9:29 PM
To: Shelley Fite
Subject: Wayne Ruoho, character letter

Wayne is my boyfriends dad and while he may have made mistakes in the past I believe it's time he gets let out to live his life. Zach hasn't had his dad in his life since he was 7 years old and it's been very hard for him. I have heard so many more good stories about Wayne than I ever have bad ones. And Zach just lights up every time he gets to hear from his dad. Please consider his release and how much it will impact his children. They need their dad.

Kacey Fischer